

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

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R 161150Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 985

INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 7178

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BR

SUBJECT: DEPUTY FRANCELINO PEREIRA NAMED AS NEW ARENA PRESIDENT

SUMMARY: FRANCELINO PEREIRA, A FEDERAL DEPUTY FROM MINAS GERAIS SINCE 1963, HAS BEEN NAMED TO SUCCEED SENATOR PETRONIO PORTELLA AS ARENA PRESIDENT IN SEPTEMBER. FACT THAT PORTELLA'S SUCCESSOR WAS TO BE HAND-PICKED BY PRESIDENT GEISEL HAS BEEN LAMENTED AS UNDEMOCRATIC AND AS TYING GEISEL DIRECTLY TO INAUSPICIOUS FORTUNES OF GOVERNMENT PARTY, AND PEREIRA'S AGE (54) COMES AS DISAPPOINTMENT TO THOSE WHO HOPED YOUNG MAN WOULD BE PICKED TO REVITALIZE PARTY AND ENHANCE ITS ELECTORAL APPEAL. KNOWN PRINCIPALLY FOR AFFABILITY, HARD WORK, AN IMPRESSIVE ELECTORAL RECORD, AND EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE WITHIN PARTY HIERARCHY, PEREIRA HAS NO NATIONAL POLITICAL REPUTATION AND HIS DESIGNATION IS NEUTRAL WITH RESPECT TO DISTENSION. THE SUBSTANTIAL ATTENTION GIVEN THE SELECTION PROCESS IS DUE LESS TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JOB ITSELF THAN TO THE IMPORTANCE OF ARENA'S POLITICAL STRENGTH TO THE FUTURE OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. FRANCELINO PEREIRA, A FEDERAL DEPUTY FROM MINAS GERAIS SINCE 1963, HAS BEEN NAMED TO SUCCEED SENATOR PETRONIO PORTELLA AS ARENA PRESIDENT IN SEPTEMBER. THE ANNOUNCEMENT
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CLIMAXED SEVERAL MONTHS OF CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO THE

QUESTION, DURING WHICH OVER FIFTEEN NAMES WERE CITED IN THE PRESS AS BEING IN VARIOUS DEGREES OF CONTENTION FOR THE DISGINATION.

2. EARLY IN THE PROCESS, IT WAS WIDELY URGED THAT ARENA IN EFFECT BE ALLOWED TO CHOOSE ITS OWN PRESIDENT IN A PROCESS THAT WOULD BEGIN AT THE GRASS ROOTS AND PROCEED UP THROUGH THE MUNICIPAL AND STATE DIRECTORATES TO THE NATIONAL LEVEL. NOT ONLY WOULD THIS BE CONSISTENT WITH DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES, IT WAS ARGUED, BUT IT WOULD RESULT IN THE SELECTION OF A PARTY PRESIDENT WITH GENUINE SUPPORT AT ALL LEVELS OF THE PARTY STRUCTURE AND IN ALL REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY. COUNTERING THIS HOPEFUL IDEA, HOWEVER, WERE SOME HARSH REALITIES: ARENA HAD TOO RECENTLY (SEE BRASILIA 5461 ON THE WILSON CAMPOS SENATE VOTE) CAST SERIOUS DOUBTS ON ITS RELIABILITY, AND THE FACT OF FACTIONALISM WITHIN THE PARTY AND EVEN WITHIN MANY OF ITS STATE ORGANIZATIONS MADE MOST UNLIKELY THE NOTION THAT A TRUE CONSENSUS COULD BE OBTAINED. THUS, WELL IN ADVANCE OF THE ACTUAL SELECTION IT WAS AUTHORITATIVELY MADE KNOWN THAT GEISEL HIMSELF WOULD MAKE THE CHOICE. THE POLITICAL CLASS CONSOLED ITSELF WITH THE FACT THAT GEISEL WOULD BE CONSULTING TOP ARENA LEADERS ON THE MATTER, BUT SOME WORRIED THAT BY PERSONALLY ASSUMING THE TASK, GEISEL WAS ALSO ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR ARENA'S INAUSPICIOUS FORTUNES.

3. THERE ALSO AROSE A DEBATE REGARDING WHAT POSITION THE IDEAL CANDIDATE WOULD CURRENTLY BE HOLDING: THE INITIAL ASSUMPTIONS WERE THAT THE NEW ARENA PRESIDENT WOULD BE, LIKE ALL BUT ONE OF HIS PREDECESSORS, A SENATOR. SOME HOPED THAT THE NEW PRESIDENT WOULD ENJOY NATIONAL PRESTIGE, EITHER AS A PROMINENT SENATOR OR IN SOME OTHER CAPACITY (INCREDIBLY, PRINCIPAL GEISEL CONFIDENT GENERAL GOLBERY AND DISTINGUISHED SOLDIER/POLITICIAN MARSHAL CORDEIRO DE FARIAS WERE MENTIONED AS POSSIBILITIES). AN OPPOSING VIEW HELD THAT SELECTION OF A YOUNG, UP-AND-COMING DEPUTY WOULD BE BEST, HELPING TO REVITALIZE THE PARTY AND ENHANCE ITS ELECTORAL APPEAL. (SOME ARGUED AGAINST THIS LAST THESIS ON THE GROUNDS THAT ARENA SENATORS, ESPECIALLY THE MORE PROMINENT, WOULD FIND IT DEMEANING TO APPEAR TO BE TAKING ORDERS IN ANY SENSE FROM A MEMBER OF THE LOWER HOUSE.)

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4. COMMENT: AGAINST THE FOREGOING CRITERIA AND CONSIDERATIONS, FRANCELINO PEREIRA FAILS ON SOME COUNTS: AT 54 YEARS OF AGE HE CANNOT BE CALLED YOUNG, ALTHOUGH SOME HAVE ARGUED THAT HIS YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE AND STYLE GIVE HIM APPEAL TO THE YOUNG: HE HAS NO NATIONAL POLITICAL REPUTATION: AND QUESTION HAS ALREADY ARISEN AS TO HIS ABILITY TO TRANSLATE HIS OWN IMPRESSIVE ELECTORAL RECORD IN MINAS GERAIS (MOST VOTED

ARENA DEPUTY LAST TIME) INTO A SUBSTANTIAL NATIONAL VOTE FOR ARENA. IN THIS GENERAL VEIN, A CARTOON IN THE JORNAL DE BRASILIA SHOWED A DOCTOR TELLING AN ANXIOUSLY WAITING FATHER, "IT'S A BOY. HE DOESN'T WEIGH MUCH, BUT HE'S DOING WELL."

5. IN SOME RESPECTS, OF COURSE, PEREIRA HAS INDEED BEEN DOING WELL. HE IS KNOWN FOR HIS AFFABILITY, AND HIS CAPACITY FOR GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE VARIOUS GROUPS AND LEADERS WITHIN ARENA DOUBTLESS RECOMMENDED HIM FOR THE POSITION, AS DID HIS REPUTATION FOR HARD WORK AND HIS EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE PARTY'S ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE, WHERE HE HAS WORKED FOR SOME YEARS. HIS PAST ASSOCIATION WITH SENATE PRESIDENT MAGALHAES PINTO (WHEN THE LATTER WAS GOVERNOR OF MINAS GERAIS) AND MORE RECENTLY UNDER PORTELLA IN THE PARTY'S ADMINISTRATION UNDOUBTEDLY HELPED HIM OBTAIN WHAT WAS APPARENTLY THE IMPORTANT BACKING OF THOSE TWO FOR THE POST. (ALSO, ALTHOUGH PEREIRA'S POLITICAL CAREER HAS BEEN IN OR FROM MINAS GERAIS, HE IS, LIKE PORTELLA, A NATIVE OF PIAUI.)

6. IT HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN HOPED BY SOME THAT THE DESIGNATION OF PORTELLA'S SUCCESSOR WOULD INDICATE SOMETHING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF DISTENSION (BRASILIA 6683), BUT THE SELECTION OF PEREIRA IS NEUTRAL IN THIS RESPECT. AS VARIOUS COMMENTS HAVE NOTED, HIS RECORD IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES IS RELATIVELY THIN ON MATTERS OF NATIONAL POLITICAL MOMENT, AND SUGGESTS NOTHING IN PARTICULAR ABOUT HIS IDEOLOGICAL INCLINATIONS. WROTE A DISAPPOINTED ESTADO DE SAO PAULO COLUMNIST FOLLOWING PEREIRA'S SELECTION, "WHAT REMAINS TO BE KNOWN-- AND IT IS REALLY THE ONLY IMPORTANT THING TO EMERGE FROM A MEDIOCRE EPISODE-- IS IF DEPUTY FRANCELINO PEREIRA WAS CHOSEN TO PLACE ARENA SQUARELY WITHIN THE LINE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENTS WITH POLITICAL DISTENSION. . . OR IF, TO THE CONTRARY, HIS INDICATION IS AN EXPRESSION OF FALLING BACK. CONFIDENTIAL

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OR IF THE RENOVATION ONLY MEANS CHANGING NAMES WITHOUT CHANGING ANYTHING."

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 7178

7. THE LAST ALTERNATIVE STRIKES US AS THE MOST PROBABLY, FOR WE FIND IT EXTREMELY UNLIKELY THAT GEISEL WAS SEEKING A SYMBOL REGARDING DISTENTION OR EVEN A NATINAL POLITICAL FIGURE WITH A PROUNOUNCED POSITION ON THE QUESTION. ALTHOUGH PEREIRA WILL PROCEED TO BECOME NATIONALLY KNOWN, AND HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS WILL BE TAKEN AS AUTHORITATIVE EXPRESSIONS OF PRESIDENTIAL SENTIMENT, HE WILL FUNCTION, BEYOND HIS INTERNAL PARTY ROLE, PRIMARILY AS A COMMUNICATIONS LINK BETWEEN THE PARTY AND GEISEL, PRINCIPALLY WITH A VIEW TO ENSURING THAT WHAT THE GOVERNMENT WANTS, ARENA DELIVERS.

8. THUS, IN SUGGESTING THAT MERELY THE IDENTITY OF PORTELLA'S SUCCESSOR SHOULD MEAN SOMETHING ABOUT DISTENSION, THE ESTADO COLUMNIST MISSED THEPOINT. THERE IS, HOWEVER, A LINK WITH DISTENTION A LINK WHICH EXPLAINS THE SUBSTANTIAL ATTENTION GIVEN THE PROCESS OF FILLING A JOB WITH SCANT DIRECT AUTHORITY: THE NEW ARENA PRESIDENT IS SUPPOSED, SOMEHOW, TO MAKE ARENA STRONG; AND A STRONG ARENA CONTINUES TO APPEAR TO BE THE ONLY HOPE FOR FURTHER POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT AT SOME POINT DOWN THE ROAD. END COMMENT.

9. BIO DATA ON PEREIRA FOLLOWS BY AIRGRAM.
CRIMMINS

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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TAGS: PINT, BR, (PEREIRA, FRANCELINO)
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Type: TE
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